

REMARKS

I. INTRODUCTION

Claim 26 has been amended. Claims 1-25 and 41-46 have previously been cancelled. Support for the amendments can be found at least at ¶¶ [0006], [0008], and [0027] of the specification. Thus, claims 26-40 remain pending in the present application. No new matter has been added. In light of the above amendments and the following remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that all presently pending claims are in condition for allowance.

II. THE 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) REJECTIONS SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN

Claims 26-29, 31, 32, 34, 36, and 37 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) for being obvious over Ota et al (U.S. Patent No. 5,811,053).

Claim 26 has been amended to recite “[a] method for manufacturing a surface decor for a trim part, *the surface decor comprising a first region formed exclusively by a decor inlay and a second region formed by a cast skin*, comprising: introducing the decor inlay into a space between upper and lower tools of a casting tool; *clamping an edging of the decor inlay between the upper and lower tools so that the edging projects into a cavity formed between the upper and lower tools and corresponding to the second region of the surface decor, a remaining portion of the decor inlay being accommodated outside of said cavity, the cavity being sealed at a location where the decor inlay is clamped between the upper and lower tools*; and filling the cavity between the upper and lower tools with a curing material to form the cast skin enclosing the edging after the decor inlay has been clamped between the upper and lower tools.”

Ota fails to disclose that one of the two regions of the manufactured surface decor is supposed to be formed exclusively by a decor inlay, the cast skin covering only a second region of the surface decor. In contrast, Ota only discloses a surface decor comprising a skin (skin member 30), which covers all regions of the surface decor

including a region covered by an inlay (ornamental sheet 40). (See Ota, Fig. 9). Consequently, Ota fails to disclose or suggest the limitations of the claimed invention in which only an edging of the decor inlay projects into a cavity to be filled with the curing material for the cast skin, a remaining portion of the decor inlay being accommodated outside of said cavity, the cavity being sealed at a location where the decor inlay is clamped between the upper and lower tools. It is clear, however, that in Ota the semi-molten resin material comes into contact with the most of the surface skin member 30. (See Ota, Figs. 7-8). The new features of the claimed invention discussed above have the advantageous effect that the decor inlay is prevented from being contaminated or damaged by the curing material forming the cast skin, even if the decor inlay is made of a material that is not compatible with the curing material. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 26 and its dependent claims 27-29, 31, 32, 34, 36, and 37 are allowable over Ota.

Claims 30, 33, 35, and 40 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) for being obvious over Ota in view of Spengler (U.S. Patent No. 6,214,157). Claim 29 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) for being obvious over Ota in view of Loren (U.S. Patent No. 4,847,024).

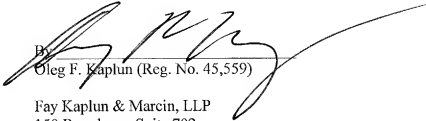
Applicant respectfully submits that neither Spengler nor Loren cure the deficiencies of Ota and that Ota, Spengler, and Loren, taken alone or in any combination, fail to disclose or suggest *“the surface decor comprising a first region formed exclusively by a decor inlay and a second region formed by a cast skin”* and *“clamping an edging of the decor inlay between the upper and lower tools so that the edging projects into a cavity formed between the upper and lower tools and corresponding to the second region of the surface decor, a remaining portion of the decor inlay being accommodated outside of said cavity, the cavity being sealed at a location where the decor inlay is clamped between the upper and lower tools,”* as recited in claim 26. Because claims 29, 30, 33, 35, and 40 depend on claim 26, it is respectfully submitted that these claims are also allowable.

CONCLUSION

It is therefore respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable. All issues raised by the Examiner having been addressed, an early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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